The Sin Of Prayerlessness by F. F. Bosworth - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2014/8/10 11:08

It is necessary that each individual shall mention his sin by name if his conscience is to do its work and he is to have the "contrite spirit" which God loves, and with which He dwells, and which is essential to communion with God. There is probably no single sin which most of modern ministers and Christians ought to acknowledge with deeper shame than the awful sin of prayerlessness.

You may ask: What is it that makes prayerlessness such a great sin? Many, because of their blindness and lack of spiritual life, look upon it as merely a weakness. There is so much talk about lack of time, and of distractions, that the deep guilt of prayerlessness is not recognized. It is of infinite importance that all shall see the sinfulness of prayerlessness.

A Reproach to God

Just think, the glorious God of the universe invites us each to come to Him, ask of Him such things as we need, and to experience the great blessing of fellowship with Him. He has created us in His own image and has redeemed us by His own Son, so that in converse with Him we might find our highest glory and salvation. What use are we making of this heavenly privilege? How many there are who take only five minutes for prayer! They say that they have no time, and that the heart desire for prayer is lacking. They have none of the joy in prayer which all have who commune with God.

If any of their friends come to visit them they have time, they make time, even at the cost of sacrifice, to converse with them. Yes, they have time for everything that really interests them, but no time for the exquisite delight of fellowship with God which is the height of their calling. Paul writes: "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son" (1 Cor. 1:9). They find time for a creature who can be of service to them, but day after day, month after month passes, and there is no time to spend one hour out of the twenty-four with God in fellowship and prayer which is the chief business of a Christian, and the main purpose of redemption.

What a dishonor to God this is that I dare to say I cannot find time for fellowship with Him! How believers need to see their sin and cry out to God for forgiveness and cleansing from this awful sin of prayerlessness.

It Is the Cause of a Deficient Spiritual Life

It is proof that, for the most part, our life is still under the power of "the flesh." Prayer is the pulse of the spiritual life; by it you can tell what is the condition of the heart. Fellowship with God in prayer is the very essence of the Christian life. The sin of prayerlessness is a proof for any Christian that the soul is in deadly sickness and weakness.

What a tragedy is the modern feebleness of the church to fulfill her calling! How wicked is her indifference to the millions of unsaved whom Christ entrusted to her, that she might make known to them His salvation.

What is the reason why many thousands of Christian workers in the world have not a greater influence? Nothing but their prayerlessness in their service. They are often very active, but not "in the Spirit." In their study and work, in their preaching and conversation with people, they lack that ceaseless prayer which brings down from on High, the only power which can accomplish the will of God. In the case of every believer it is nothing but the sin of prayerlessness which is the cause of the lack of a powerful spirit life.

The Loss the Church Suffers As a Result of the Prayerlessness of the Minister

It is the business of the minister to train believers up to a life of prayer. But how can a leader do this who is himself without the spirit of prayer and who does not receive, every day, out of heaven, abundant grace for himself and for his work? The minister cannot lead a congregation higher than he is himself. He cannot with enthusiasm point out a way in which he is not himself walking or living.

How many thousands of Christians there are today who know next to nothing of the blessedness and delight of fellowship with God in prayer! How many others there are who do know something of it, and long to know more, but in the pre
aching they hear they are not persistently urged to press on to full victory. The reason is simply and only that their minist
er understands so little about the secret of powerful prayer. So many of them in these days do not give prayer the place i
n their service, which in the nature of the case, and in the will of God, is indispensably necessary.

Oh, what a difference we would see in every congregation, if ministers could be brought to see in its right light the awf
ul sin of prayerlessness, and were delivered from it! The great need of missions is the obtaining of men and women who
will give themselves to prayer for the salvation of souls. God is eager and able and ready to save and bless the world He
has redeemed if His people would cry unto Him day and night.

How can congregations be brought to this unless there comes, first, an entire change in ministers, and that they begin
to see that the indispensable thing is not preaching, not pastoral visitation, not church work, but fellowship with God in pr
ayer till they are clothed with power from on High â€“ the only power that can do the works of God?

What a glorious place every minister and every layman may occupy by first getting the victory over this root of a thous
and evils; so that with courage and joy, in faith and perseverance they can go on with God.

Living in the Spirit of Prayer

Prayerlessness is sinful because it prevents or cancels all that prayerfulness can accomplish; and prayer can accompl
ish all that God has promised to do. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," or "is mighty in its i
nfluence" (Jas. 5:16).

Cause of Prayerlessness

What is the cause of this almost universal state of prayerlessness among believers today? I answer, It is a life lived "a
ccording to the flesh" and "not according to the Spirit." This is the whole difficulty; it is impossible to pray in the Spirit and
at the same time walk after "the flesh." If a man is sick and desires healing, it is of prime importance that the true cause of the sickness be discovered. This is the first step toward recovery. In like manner, it is of the utmost importance that we realize fully what is the root of this evil of prayerlessness.

Scripture teaches us that there are but two conditions possible for the Christian. One is a walk according to "the Spirit,
" the other a walk according to "the flesh." These two powers are in hopeless conflict with each other. Thousands, today,
began in the supernatural by receiving the new birth; yet their ordinary life is not lived according to "the Spirit," but accor
ding to "the flesh." Paul inquires of the Galatians: "Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfec
t by the flesh?" (Gal. 3:3).

The Spirit must be honored not only as the Author of a new life, but also as the Leader and Director of our entire walk;
otherwise we are what the apostle calls "carnal." Let every man be born of the Spirit, but Paul says, "Let us also walk in t
he Spirit" (Gal. 5:25).

Moral and Immoral Flesh

A moral life can be lived in the flesh the same as an immoral life, but both are sinful. Paul tells us that "They that are C
hristâ€™s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). "The flesh" cannot be improved or sanctified.
"The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7).

The only way to keep out of the flesh is to "walk in the Spirit." Paul says, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the l
ust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). It is saddening to consider how many believers there are today who seldom think earnestly
about the deep and immeasurable sinfulness of "the flesh." "In me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:1
8).

The Christian who is carnal rests satisfied with the prayer of habit; but the glory, the blessedness of secret prayer is a
hidden thing to him until he sees that "the flesh," in its disposition to turn away from God, is the archenemy which makes a
praying heart impossible for him.

When a Christian does not yield entirely to the leading of the Spirit, he lives, without knowing it, under the power of "th
e flesh." The carnal life cannot possibly pray in the Spirit. After all the other parts of the armor had been named, Paul ad
ds, "With all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Eph. 6:18). Without prayer, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith,
and the sword of the Spirit, which is God’s Word, have no power.

Delivered from Prayerlessness

The victory cannot be won by human exertion or struggle, because our efforts are futile unless we first learn how to abide in Christ in simple faith. The branch can bear fruit only by its union with the vine. See that your relationship with God is what it ought to be, and it will become natural and delightful to live the life of prayer. We are not standing in a right relationship to the Lord while the sin of prayerlessness has power over us. A right relationship to the Lord Jesus, above all else, includes prayer, with both the desire and the power to pray according to God’s will.

If you try by self-effort to conquer the flesh and overcome prayerlessness you will find it impossible. This would be an endeavor by Beelzebub to cast out Beelzebub, and this can never happen. It is Jesus alone that can subdue the flesh and the devil! Do not strive in your own strength; but cast yourself at the feet of the Lord Jesus and wait upon Him in the sure confidence that He is with you and works in you. In such a trust you are in right relationship to Him. This attitude is to be perpetual.

The Inner Chamber of Prayer Is the Storm-Center on the Battlefield

What is the strategic position in the great strife between the kingdom of heaven and the power of darkness? When a general chooses the place from which he intends to strike the enemy, he pays most attention to those points which he thinks most important in the fight. On the battlefield of Waterloo there was a farmhouse which Wellington immediately saw was the key to the situation. He did not spare his troops in his endeavor to hold that point; the victory depended upon it. It is the same in the conflict between the believer and the powers of darkness.

The inner chamber of prayer is the place, the strategic position, where the decisive victory is obtained, and maintain its hold, and therefore the enemy uses all his power to get the Christian, and above all the minister, to neglect prayer. The devil knows that eloquent sermons, attractive services, pastoral visitation, and all the rest cannot damage him or his kingdom if prayer is neglected. Even Jesus had to be anointed to do His works. In the church, on the mission field, with the minister and his congregation, everything depends upon the faithful exercise of the power of prayer.

God’s child can conquer everything by prayer. Is it any wonder that Satan does his utmost to snatch that weapon from the Christian, or to hinder him in the use of it? We should be like our Lord in Gethsemane. The more violently the enemy attacked Him, the more earnestly He prayed, and He ceased not until He had obtained the victory!

Deliverance from the sin of prayerlessness is in the redemption that is in Christ; it is one of the principal blessings of the New Covenant which God Himself will impart to you through Christ Jesus. He is ready to help you in prayer. He yearns to shed abroad His love in your heart and to bestow the grace of prayer. Just as He will cleanse us from all other sins, so also will He deliver us from the sin of prayerlessness, only we must not seek the victory in our own strength. Expect everything from Him. Just as He will give all other grace in answer to prayer, so above all He will bestow the grace of a praying heart.

What folly to think that all other blessings must come from God, but that prayer, upon which everything else depends, must be obtained by personal effort! We must realize that the Lord Jesus is Himself in the inner chamber, watching over us, and holding Himself responsible to teach us how to pray. We must in child-like confidence wait on Him, expecting this blessing.

Let us remember that from a defective spiritual life nothing better can be expected than a defective prayer life. It is in vain for us, with our defective spiritual life, to endeavor to pray better. It is an impossibility. The Scriptures teach us to believe in Christ’s infinite love, and that He longs to have communion with us every moment and to keep us in the enjoyment of His fellowship.

Christ, the great Intercessor, waits to inspire each member of His Body with joy and power for communion with God in prayer. In Christ’s blood and grace there is complete deliverance from all unrighteousness, and from all prayerlessness which is unrighteousness. God’s provisions for successful praying by every child of His is perfect so perfect that Jesus said, “Every one that asketh receiveth” (Matt. 7:8).

Every Christian should be successful as an intercessor. We can not only get the victory over the sin of prayerlessness, but we can continue in this victory. Redemption is not granted to us on monthly installments; it is bestowed as fullness
of grace stored up in Christ which may be enjoyed in a new fellowship with Him every day.

Nothing can preserve us from carelessness or make it possible to continue in the glorious spirit of prayer but a close fellowship with Jesus daily. It is this intimate spiritual, personal, uninterrupted relationship to the Lord Jesus which manifests itself in our prayer lives. Jesus who loved us and died for us longs to have fellowship with us every moment of the day and keep us in the enjoyment of that fellowship. This alone will give us power as intercessors, and keep us free from the sin of prayerlessness.

Every Christian should learn that the life which Jesus bestows upon him, and supports in him, is a life of daily prayer! We should recognize how entirely vain it is to attempt to do the work of the Lord in any other way than that in which He did it. What God wills to accomplish on earth needs prayer as its indispensable condition. Every Christian throughout his life should say with the Scriptures, "first of all, supplications" (1 Tim. 2:1-6).

The Holy Spirit with whom every Christian is commanded to keep "filled," is "the Spirit of prayer." Paul says, "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). Again he writes, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). The first passage says: "WE cry"; the other: "HE cries." What a wonderful blending of the Divine and the human co-operation in prayer!

God has done His utmost to make prayer as natural and as effectual as though it were the cry of a child to an earthly father. When prayer, for which God has made such provision, is regarded by believers as a task and a burden it is proof that the Holy Spirit is, to them, to a great extent a stranger. In every true prayer the Triune God takes part, the Father who hears, the Son in whose name we pray, the Spirit who prays for us and in us.

Blessing of Victory

Deliverance from the sin of prayerlessness is a blessing of unspeakable worth. What a blessing is ours when confidence in God takes the place of self-condemnation because of prayerlessness! What a blessing is the deep consciousness that God’s grace has caused us to really bear His image, and fitted us for a life of communion with Him, and prepared us to glorify Him! What a blessing to live as true children of a King in communion with their Father, and to manifest so mething of the character of our Lord Jesus in the holy fellowship with His Father which He had when on earth!

What a blessing is ours when the hour of prayer in the inner chamber is the happiest time in the whole day for us because God is using us to carry out His plans, and making us fountains of blessing for the world around us. No one can experience so much of the joy of the Lord as those who live a life of prayer. Jesus said, "Ask, and ye shall receive, that you may be full" (John 16:24).

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